Remarks/Arguments

In the August 18, 2006 Office Action, claim 12 was rejected under section 103 as being unpatentable over Cooper (US Patent 3,991,832). Claims 12 and 13 were rejected under section 103 as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art in view of Cooper. Claims 8 and 9 were rejected under section 103 as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art in view of Cooper, and further in view of Truax et al (US Patent 4,206,580).

In this response, claim 8 is amended to specify the first, second and third motors each rotate a mower blade under first, second and third mower decks. The first and second solenoid-operated directional control valves are energized by lowering the second and third mower decks respectively into their operating positions to provide electrical signals to the first and second solenoid-operated directional control valves which provide pilot signals to first and second pilot-operated directional control valves. Additionally, claim 8 is amended to specify the first and second solenoid-operated directional control valves are de-energized by raising the first and second mower decks respectively into their non-operating positions to cut the electrical signal to the first and second solenoid-operated directional control valves to end the pilot signals.

Claim 8 is patentable over the cited references.

Applicant's admitted prior art fails to disclose a hydraulic circuit that directs a flow of hydraulic fluid from the first hydraulic motor to the second and/or third hydraulic motors without directing the flow through any other restrictive valves. Instead, the admitted prior art results in a drop in pressure, and a related drop in efficiency, due to flow restrictions such as check valves 84 and 86.

Cooper's hydraulic actuators 22, 24, 52, 55 and 56 do not rotate mower blades under mower decks. Instead, Cooper's hydraulic actuators lift, tilt and angle a dozer blade. Cooper's hydraulic actuators are not operated using solenoid-operated directional control valves that are energized by lowering mower decks into their operating positions to provide electrical signals to the directional control valves. Instead, Cooper's hydraulic actuators are operated by three manually operable open center direction control valves 64, 66 and 68.

Truax et al does not relate to a hydraulic circuit for three motors. Instead, Truax relates to a mower device with one fluid power motor 16. Truax fails to show pilot-operated directional control valves that direct hydraulic flow between more than

one motor.

Claim 9 is amended to specify that lowering both of the second and third mower decks into their operating positions causes the first and second solenoid-operated directional control valves to provide pilot signals to the first and second pilot-operated directional control valves. Claim 9 is patentable over the cited references for at least the same reasons as claim 8 on which it depends.

Claim 12 is amended to specify first, second and third hydraulic motors located on first, second and third mower decks, the second and third mower decks movable between operating and non-operating positions, and comprising a pair of solenoid-operated control valves, each solenoid-operated control valve associated with one of the second and third motors and providing a pilot signal if the mower deck on which the motor is located is moved to the operating position.

Claim 12 is patentable over the cited references.

Applicant's admitted prior art fails to disclose a hydraulic circuit that directs a flow of hydraulic fluid from a first hydraulic motor to second and/or third hydraulic motors without directing the flow through any other restrictive valves. Instead, the admitted prior art results in a drop in pressure, and a related drop in efficiency, due to flow restrictions such as check valves 84 and 86.

Cooper's hydraulic actuators 22, 24, 52, 55 and 56 are not hydraulic motors on mower decks. Instead, Cooper's hydraulic actuators lift, tilt and angle a dozer blade. Cooper's hydraulic actuators are not operated using solenoid-operated control valves associated with the motors and providing pilot signals if the mower deck on which the motor is positioned is moved to the operating position. Instead, Cooper's hydraulic actuators are operated by three manually operable open center direction control valves 64, 66 and 68.

Claim 13 is patentable over the cited references for at least the same reasons as claim 12 on which it depends.

In conclusion, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully,

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